

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 781  
By Yokley

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of United States  
Congressman James H. Quillen.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were deeply saddened to hear of the death of former Congressman James H. "Jimmy" Quillen who so ably served the people of the First Congressional District for seventeen terms in the United States House of Representatives, the longest tenure in Tennessee history; and

WHEREAS, Congressman Quillen performed his elected duties with remarkable dexterity and unprecedented devotion, and his efforts brought substantial benefits to this great State; and

WHEREAS, he was a prominent and highly influential figure in the political, social, and civic lives of his district, and he served his constituents in numerous capacities, always working diligently at his elected duties and expending the necessary effort to understand the opposing sides of complex issues; and

WHEREAS, James H. Quillen was born on January 11, 1916, near Kingsport in Scott County, Virginia; the fifth oldest of ten children, he came to Tennessee in the late 1920s when his family relocated to Sullivan County; and

WHEREAS, unusually capable and responsible from his youth, he worked several jobs to help support his family before graduating from Dobyns-Bennett High School in 1934 and taking a job with *The Kingsport Press* before moving in 1935 to *The Kingsport Times*; and

WHEREAS, in 1939, he became one of the youngest publishers in the nation when he founded *The Johnson City Times*, which converted to a daily newspaper in 1940; and

WHEREAS, soon after the attack upon Pearl Harbor, James Quillen enlisted in the United States Navy as an ensign, and he progressed to the rank of Lieutenant while serving in both the Pacific and Atlantic theaters before being discharged in 1946; when our nation most

needed gallant individuals to protect our freedom and our way of life, he answered the call of duty and thus holds an exalted position among the many brave men and women who have defended our nation against foreign aggression throughout American history; and

WHEREAS, following his military service, Jimmy Quillen returned to his beloved Tennessee and earned an unsurpassed reputation for civic concern and inspired leadership while gaining the respect and admiration of his community in his business activities in construction, real estate, and insurance; and

WHEREAS, in 1954, the good people of his district first evinced their great faith in the political and governmental capabilities of James H. Quillen by electing him as their representative to the General Assembly, a position in which he performed admirably during four terms; a leader among leaders, he was elected Minority Leader and was a member of the Legislative Council; and

WHEREAS, upon the untimely 1962 death of his mentor, U.S. Representative B. Carroll Reece, James H. Quillen humbly answered the call of his constituency and sought the seat for the First Congressional District from Tennessee, receiving the endorsement of Mrs. Reece, and

WHEREAS, a prominent and highly influential figure in the political, social, and civic lives of his district, Congressman Quillen always worked diligently at his elected duties and expending the necessary effort to understand the opposing sides of complex issues; and

WHEREAS, Congressman Quillen was a dynamic and aggressive participant in the legislative process and earned the respect and admiration of his colleagues for his outstanding contributions to Congress; and

WHEREAS, a tireless proponent of progress, he was a champion for his constituents' needs, and his actions precipitated the superb quality of life that is enjoyed by the people of his district and indeed, all Tennesseans; and

WHEREAS, recognized for his hard work and commitment to the people, Congressman Jimmy Quillen was re-elected to Congress 16 times by huge margins, receiving 90 percent of the total vote on a regular basis; and

WHEREAS, having respectfully earned the title of "Mr. Republican" in Tennessee, Congressman Quillen became a prominent figure in the National Republican Party, serving as Parliamentarian of the 1980, 1984, and 1988 Republican National Conventions; in 1956, he was

a delegate-at-large and later served as a delegate for the 1964, 1968, 1972, 1976, and 1992 conventions; and

WHEREAS, in the United States House of Representatives, Congressman Quillen again earned distinction in a galaxy of stars and became a member of the Republican Leadership, serving as ranking minority member of the House Rules Committee from 1975 to 1990 and as Republican Chairman Emeritus of the House Rules Committee of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress; and

WHEREAS, esteemed by Republicans and Democrats alike for his service to the citizens of Tennessee, he was called “an incredible public servant for Tennessee’s First District” by United States Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, who added, “Tennessee leaders have continued to look to him for guidance”; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen called Congressman Quillen “a great Tennessean with a long life of service,” and President George W. Bush remembered Congressman Quillen as “a dedicated public servant to the people of East Tennessee”; and

WHEREAS, the greatest testimony to Congressman Quillen may be those projects to benefit the citizens of Tennessee that he initiated, supported through the legislative process, and saw to fruition that have become his legacy; many have been appropriately named in his honor, such as the Quillen College of Medicine at East Tennessee State University, the James H. Quillen Veterans Administration Medical Center in Johnson City, the James H. Quillen Federal Courthouse in Greeneville, and the Quillen Parkway, the new Interstate 26 in East Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, his many accomplishments aside, Congressman Quillen was most appreciative of the great love and companionship he has shared with his dear wife, Cecile Cox Quillen, who passed away in 2002; he was deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, James H. Quillen leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of a true Tennessee legend and exceptional public servant, constant friend, and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Congressman James H. "Jimmy" Quillen, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction as one of the great leaders and public servants in Tennessee's rich history.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Congressman Quillen.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.